



## FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

### Agency Information Collection Activities; Proposed Collection; Comment Request;

#### Extension

**AGENCY:** Federal Trade Commission.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA), the Federal Trade Commission (FTC or Commission) is seeking public comment on its proposal to extend for an additional three years the FTC's portion of the information collection requirements contained in the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Regulation N (the Mortgage Acts and Practices—Advertising Rule). The FTC generally shares enforcement of Regulation N with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). The current clearance expires on January 31, 2023.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

**ADDRESSES:** Interested parties may file a comment online or on paper by following the instructions in the Request for Comments part of the SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION section below. Write "Paperwork Reduction Act Comment: FTC File No. P072108" on your comment, and file your comment online at <https://www.regulations.gov> by following the instructions on the web-based form. If you prefer to file your comment on paper, mail your comment to the following address: Federal Trade Commission, Office of the Secretary, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite CC-5610 (Annex J), Washington, DC 20580, or deliver your comment to the following address: Federal Trade Commission, Office of the Secretary, Constitution Center, 400 7th Street, SW, 5th Floor, Suite 5610 (Annex J), Washington, DC 20024.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Carole L. Reynolds, Attorney, Division of Financial Practices, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20580, (202) 326-3230.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

*Title:* Mortgage Acts and Practices – Advertising (Regulation N), 12 CFR part 1014.

*OMB Control Number:* 3084-0156.

*Type of Review:* Extension of a currently approved collection.

*Abstract:* The FTC and the CFPB generally share enforcement authority for Regulation N and thus the two agencies share burden estimates for Regulation N.<sup>1</sup> Regulation N’s recordkeeping requirements constitute a “collection of information”<sup>2</sup> for purposes of the PRA.<sup>3</sup> The Rule does not impose a disclosure requirement.

Regulation N requires covered persons to retain: (1) Copies of materially different commercial communications and related materials, regarding any term of any mortgage credit product, that the person made or disseminated during the relevant time period; (2) documents describing or evidencing all mortgage credit products available to consumers during the relevant time period; and (3) documents describing or evidencing all additional products or services (such as credit insurance or credit disability insurance) that are or may be offered or provided with the mortgage credit products available to consumers during the relevant time period.<sup>4</sup> A failure to keep such records would be an independent violation of the Rule.

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<sup>1</sup> As background, the FTC’s Mortgage Acts and Practices—Advertising Rule, 16 CFR part 321, was issued by the FTC in July 2011, 76 FR 43826 (July 22, 2011), and became effective on August 19, 2011. The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010 (Dodd-Frank Act) transferred to the CFPB the Commission’s rulemaking authority under section 626 of the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act on July 21, 2011. As a result, the CFPB republished the Mortgage Acts and Practices—Advertising Rule, at 12 CFR part 1014, which became effective December 30, 2011. 76 FR 78130. Thereafter, the Commission rescinded its Rule, which was effective on April 13, 2012. 77 FR 22200. Under the Dodd-Frank Act, the FTC retains its authority to bring law enforcement actions to enforce Regulation N.

<sup>2</sup> Section 1014.5 of the Rule sets forth the recordkeeping requirements.

<sup>3</sup> See 44 U.S.C. 3502(3)(A).

<sup>4</sup> Section 1014.5 of the Rule sets forth the recordkeeping requirements.

Commission staff believes the recordkeeping requirements pertain to records that are usual and customary and kept in the ordinary course of business for many covered persons, such as mortgage brokers, lenders, and servicers; real estate brokers and agents; home builders, and advertising agencies.<sup>5</sup> As to these persons, the retention of these documents does not constitute a “collection of information,” as defined by OMB’s regulations that implement the PRA.<sup>6</sup> Certain other covered persons such as lead generators and rate aggregators may not currently maintain these records in the ordinary course of business.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the recordkeeping requirements for those persons would constitute a “collection of information.”

The information retained under the Rule’s recordkeeping requirements is used by the Commission to substantiate compliance with the Rule and may also provide a basis for the Commission to bring an enforcement action. Without the required records, it would be difficult either to ensure that entities are complying with the Rule’s requirements or to bring enforcement actions based on violations of the Rule.

*Likely Respondents:* Lead generators and rate aggregators.

*Estimated Annual Hours Burden:* 1,500 hours.

- Derived from 1,000 likely respondents x approximately 3 hours for each respondent per

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<sup>5</sup> Some covered persons, particularly mortgage brokers and lenders, are subject to state recordkeeping requirements for mortgage advertisements. *See, e.g.*, Fla. Stat. 494.00165 (2021); Ind. Code Ann. 23–2.5–8.5 (2021); Kan. Stat. Ann. 9–2208 (2022); Minn. Stat. 58.14 (2021); Wash. Rev. Code 19.146.060 (2021), and WAC 208-660-450 (2022). Many mortgage brokers, lenders (including finance companies), and servicers are subject to state recordkeeping requirements for mortgage transactions and related documents, and these may include descriptions of mortgage credit products. *See, e.g.*, Mich. Comp. Laws Serv. 445.1671 (2022); N.Y. Banking Law 597 (Consol. 2021); Tenn. Code Ann. 45–13–206 (2021). Lenders and mortgagees approved by the Federal Housing Administration must retain copies of all print and electronic advertisements and promotional materials for a period of two years from the date the materials are circulated or used to advertise. *See* 24 CFR part 202. Various other entities, such as real estate brokers and agents, home builders, and advertising agencies can be indirectly covered by state recordkeeping requirements for mortgage advertisements and/or retain ads to demonstrate compliance with state law. *See, e.g.*, 76 Del. Laws, c. 421, § 1.

<sup>6</sup> *See* 44 U.S.C. 3502(3)(A); 5 CFR 1320.3(b)(2).

<sup>7</sup> *See, e.g., United States v. Intermundo Media, LLC, dba Delta Prime Refinance*, No. 1:14-cv-2529 (D. Colo. filed Sept. 12, 2014) (D. Colo. Oct. 7, 2014) (stipulated order for permanent injunction and civil penalty judgment), *available at* <https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/cases/140912deltaprimestiporder.pdf>. The complaint charged this lead generator with numerous violations of Regulation N, including recordkeeping, and of other federal mortgage advertising mandates.

year to do these tasks = 3,000 hours.

- Since the FTC shares enforcement authority with the CFPB for Regulation N, the FTC's allotted PRA burden is 1,500 annual hours.

*Estimated Annual Labor Cost Burden:* \$26,550, which is derived from 1,500 hours × \$17.70 per hour.<sup>8</sup>

As required by section 3506(c)(2)(A) of the PRA, 44 U.S.C. 3506(c)(2)(A), the FTC is providing this opportunity for public comment before requesting that OMB extend the existing clearance for the information collection requirements contained in Regulation N.

### **Burden Statement:**

*Estimated total annual hours burden:* 1,500 hours (for the FTC).

Commission staff estimates that the Rule's recordkeeping requirements will affect approximately 1,000 persons<sup>9</sup> who would not otherwise retain such records in the ordinary course of business. As noted, this estimate includes lead generators and rate aggregators that may provide commercial communications regarding mortgage credit product terms.<sup>10</sup> Although the Commission cannot estimate with precision the time required to gather and file the required records, it is reasonable to assume that covered persons will each spend approximately 3 hours per year to do these tasks, for a total of 3,000 hours (1,000 persons × 3 hours). Since the FTC generally shares enforcement authority with the CFPB for Regulation N, the FTC's allotted PRA burden is 1,500 annual hours.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This estimate is based on mean hourly wages for office support file clerks provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. See U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wages—May 2021 table 1 ("National employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey by occupation"), released March 31, 2022, available at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ocwage.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> No general source provides precise numbers of the various categories of covered persons. Commission staff, therefore, has used the following sources and inputs to arrive at this estimated total: 1,000 lead generators and rate aggregators, based on staff's administrative experience.

<sup>10</sup> The Commission does not know what percentage of these persons are, in fact, engaged in covered conduct under the Rule, i.e., providing commercial communications about mortgage credit product terms. For purposes of these estimates, the Commission has assumed all of them are covered by the recordkeeping provisions and are not retaining these records in the ordinary course of business.

<sup>11</sup> This estimate reflects the same burden compared to prior FTC estimates, because many entities can be indirectly covered by state recordkeeping requirements for mortgage advertisements and/or retain ads to demonstrate compliance with state law, as discussed above. See *supra* note 4. The FTC notes that the

*Estimated labor costs: \$26,550.*

Commission staff derived labor costs by applying appropriate hourly cost figures to the burden hours described above. Staff further assumes that office support file clerks will handle the Rule's record retention requirements at an hourly rate of \$17.70.<sup>12</sup> Based upon the above estimates and assumptions, the total annual labor cost to retain and file documents, for the FTC's allotted burden, is \$26,550 (1,500 hours × \$17.70 per hour).

Absent information to the contrary, staff anticipates that existing storage media and equipment that covered persons use in the ordinary course of business will satisfactorily accommodate incremental recordkeeping under the Rule. Accordingly, staff does not anticipate that the Rule will require any new capital or other non-labor expenditures.

### **Request for Comments**

Pursuant to Section 3506(c)(2)(A) of the PRA, the FTC invites comments on: (1) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (2) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) ways to minimize the burden of maintaining records and providing disclosures to consumers. All comments must be received on or before [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

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CFPB's recent information collection filing with OMB for Regulation N also reflects the view that, in large part, most entities either retain records in the ordinary course of business or to demonstrate compliance with other laws. See generally Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, Agency Information Collection Activities: Submission for OMB Review; Comment Review, 87 FR 40513 (July 7, 2022), available at [2022-14474.pdf \(govinfo.gov\)](https://www.govinfo.gov/2022-14474.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> This estimate is based on mean hourly wages for office support file clerks provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. See U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wages—May 2021, table 1 ("National employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey by occupation"), released March 31, 2022, available at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ocwage.pdf>.

You can file a comment online or on paper. For the FTC to consider your comment, we must receive it on or before [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]. Write “Paperwork Reduction Act Comment: FTC File No. P072108” on your comment. Your comment—including your name and your state—will be placed on the public record of this proceeding, including the <https://www.regulations.gov> website.

Due to the public health emergency in response to the COVID-19 outbreak and the agency’s heightened security screening, postal mail addressed to the Commission will be subject to delay. We encourage you to submit your comments online through the <https://www.regulations.gov> website.

If you prefer to file your comment on paper, write “Paperwork Reduction Act Comment: FTC File No. P072108” on your comment and on the envelope, and mail your comment to the following address: Federal Trade Commission, Office of the Secretary, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite CC–5610 (Annex J), Washington, DC 20580; or deliver your comment to the following address: Federal Trade Commission, Office of the Secretary, Constitution Center, 400 7th Street SW, 5th Floor, Suite 5610 (Annex J), Washington, DC 20024. If possible, submit your paper comment to the Commission by courier or overnight service.

Because your comment will become publicly available at <https://www.regulations.gov>, you are solely responsible for making sure that your comment does not include any sensitive or confidential information. In particular, your comment should not include any sensitive personal information, such as your or anyone else’s Social Security number; date of birth; driver’s license number or other state identification number, or foreign country equivalent; passport number; financial account number; or credit or debit card number. You are also solely responsible for making sure that your comment does not include any sensitive health information, such as medical records or other individually identifiable health information. In addition, your comment should not include any “trade secret or any commercial or financial information which . . . is

privileged or confidential” —as provided by Section 6(f) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. 46(f), and FTC Rule 4.10(a)(2), 16 CFR 4.10(a)(2) —including in particular competitively sensitive information such as costs, sales statistics, inventories, formulas, patterns, devices, manufacturing processes, or customer names.

Comments containing material for which confidential treatment is requested must be filed in paper form, must be clearly labeled “Confidential,” and must comply with FTC Rule 4.9(c). In particular, the written request for confidential treatment that accompanies the comment must include the factual and legal basis for the request, and must identify the specific portions of the comment to be withheld from the public record. *See* FTC Rule 4.9(c). Your comment will be kept confidential only if the General Counsel grants your request in accordance with the law and the public interest. Once your comment has been posted publicly at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov), we cannot redact or remove your comment unless you submit a confidentiality request that meets the requirements for such treatment under FTC Rule 4.9(c), and the General Counsel grants that request.

The FTC Act and other laws that the Commission administers permit the collection of public comments to consider and use in this proceeding, as appropriate. The Commission will consider all timely and responsive public comments that it receives on or before [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]. For information on the Commission’s privacy policy, including routine uses permitted by the Privacy Act, see <https://www.ftc.gov/site-information/privacy-policy>.

**Josephine Liu,**

*Assistant General Counsel for Legal Counsel.*

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